

17

a solid panel which is X-ray translucent, although the side panel is not shown in the drawing figures for this embodiment. Although the top surface of the anterior plate **311** is substantially planar in the view of FIG. **15**, it would be appreciated from FIGS. **25**, **28** and **29** that it may have some degree of a crown or curvature when viewed from that angle.

FIGS. **30-35** illustrate a fourth alternative embodiment. In this embodiment the anterior plate **411** has a top surface generally arranged on a plane (P), and top and bottom load bearing surfaces **413** and **414** have between them an included angle centered along an axis (A). In this embodiment, the axis (A) is arranged at a non-right angle of 82 degrees relative to the plane (P) of the top surface of the anterior plate **411**. This angle allows the support device to accommodate an included angle between the first and second spinal vertebrae. Also, while the description describes a top load surface **413** and a bottom load surface **414**, the device may be installed "upside down" that is with the surface **414** being on top and the surface **413** being on bottom. Other than as described above, the insert may have any of the features that were described with respect to the embodiment of FIGS. **1-11**. In particular, this embodiment may include side surfaces each comprising a solid panel which is X-ray translucent, although the side panel is not shown in the drawing figures for this embodiment. Although the top surface of the anterior plate **411** is substantially planar in the view of FIG. **15**, it would be appreciated from FIGS. **31**, **34** and **35** that it may have some degree of a crown or curvature when viewed from that angle.

FIG. **36** is a perspective view of the third alternative embodiment described above.

FIG. **37** is a perspective view of the second alternative embodiment described above.

FIGS. **38** and **39** illustrate a spacer **500** that can be used to size the graft site on the vertebra body with the outline support device on top. This allows the surgeon to test the proper height of the graft site on top of the support device providing a confirmation of what area of the vertebral body may need to be adjusted so that the support device will rest flush on the vertebra body. With the spacer in the vertebral disk space, the surgeon can take a lateral X-ray to confirm which column support device would be most desirable for final placement, such as the right degree angle embodiment disclosed in FIGS. **1-11**, one of the 86 degree embodiments described above, or one of the 82 degree angle embodiments described above. A jig can be provided to lay over the lateral X-ray in surgery to confirm with degree of column support will provide optimum fit. FIGS. **40** and **41** describe a handle **510** that can be used to insert the sizing spacer.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made to the anterior cervical spinal column support device as disclosed herein. Thus, it is intended that the present invention encompasses such modifications and variations, provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

Although the various examples of one embodiment have been described in detail with particular reference to certain exemplary aspects thereof, it should be understood that the invention is capable of other embodiments and its details are capable of modifications in various obvious respects. As is readily apparent to those skilled in the art, variations and modifications can be affected while remaining within the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the foregoing disclosure, description, and figures are for illustrative purposes only and do not in any way limit the invention, which is defined only by the claims.

18

What is claimed is:

1. An inter-vertebral implant for insertion between a first spinal vertebra and a second spinal vertebra, comprising:
  - a hollow frame top load bearing surface and a bottom load bearing surface, wherein the top load bearing surface and the bottom load bearing surface each include an opening allowing access to an interior of the frame;
  - a rear surface having at least a portion that is opaque to X-rays attached between the top load bearing surface and the bottom load bearing surface and a front surface having at least a portion that is opaque to X-rays extending between the top load bearing surface and the bottom load bearing surface;
  - a plate arranged along a plane (P), and attached to the front surface of the implant at a fixed angle, defining the front surface of the implant, the plate including a plurality of clearance holes for receiving a corresponding plurality of medical fasteners;
- and,
- two solid side surfaces extending between the front surface and the rear surface, each side surface including a solid side panel which has a portion that X-ray translucent encompassed by a portion that is opaque,
  - wherein the top load bearing surface comprises a first frictional surface for applying frictional forces between the top load bearing surface and an adjacent bone surface; and the bottom load bearing surface comprises a second frictional surface for applying frictional forces between the bottom load bearing surface and an adjacent bone surface and wherein the top load bearing surface and the bottom load bearing surface between them form an axis of elongation (A) that is an intermediate axis between an elongated top load bearing surface and an elongated bottom load bearing surface, and wherein the plane (P) is at a non-right angle with respect to the axis of the elongation (A).
2. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 1, wherein: the non-right angle is approximately 86 degrees.
3. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 1, wherein: the non-right angle is approximately 82 degrees.
4. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 1, where the non-right angle is within a range of between 86 and 82 degrees.
5. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 1, wherein: the top load bearing surface and the bottom load bearing surface are each opaque to X-rays.
6. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 5, wherein said solid side panels are load bearing members constructed and arranged so that: said inter-vertebral implant with said solid side panels has a first strength; and said inter-vertebral implant without said solid side panels has a second strength; said first strength being from two to ten times greater than said second strength.
7. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 1, wherein: each solid side panel extends between the front surface and the rear surface, and extends between the top load bearing surface and the bottom load bearing surface.
8. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 1, wherein: a vertical distance between the top load bearing surface and the bottom load bearing surface is smaller at the rear surface than at the front surface.
9. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 1, wherein: said hollow frame is a hollow right prism-shaped frame.
10. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 9, wherein: said hollow right prism-shaped frame is a hollow isosceles trapezoidal right prism-shaped frame.
11. The inter-vertebral implant of claim 10: wherein said rear surface defines a first end of said hollow isosceles trap-